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## DCF undertakes an independent external review

In June 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) commissioned the Center for the Support of Families (CSF) from Maryland, a nationally-known human services program management consulting and training organization with significant expertise in child welfare to undertake an independent external review of DCF. The purpose of the external review was to evaluate our front end practices, determine if our practices provide a solid foundation for achieving our safety goals and to ensure that the Department is meeting its goal of keeping children and families safe. This review included the following four areas of activity:

- Intake and screening of incoming reports of child maltreatment;
- Investigation of the reports;
- Assessment of the circumstances of children and families involved in the reports; and
- Service delivery.

In order to evaluate the four areas of activity, CSF used an expanded case study methodology that included a:

- Review of a sample of more than 200 cases involving families served by DCF;
- Survey administered to DCF staff electronically;
- Review of Departmental policy, training curricula, and quality assurance findings; and
- Review of selected data reports to be provided by DCF from its statewide child welfare information system, Family Net.

The Center for the Support of Families presented the final report to the Department in December 2008. In its findings, CSF identified 18 practices that reflected solid case practice and identified 22 opportunities for DCF to strengthen its clinical case practice. Greater than 80% of CSF's 22 recommendations will be addressed through implementation of the DCF strategic plan. [ [top](#) ]

## Dr. Laurel Leslie joins the DCF

Laurel K. Leslie, MD, MPH will be working with DCF for the next two years under a fellowship from the William T. Grant Foundation. The Foundation created the fellowship program to foster connections among researchers, policymakers, and practice settings with the ultimate goal to improve youth outcomes. Dr. Leslie is a behavioral-developmental pediatrician and researcher at Tufts University School of Medicine and a practicing pediatrician at Tufts Medical Center. Her interests focus on the identification and treatment of developmental and mental health needs of children and adolescents across the child welfare, health, mental health, and school sectors. She is particularly interested in the impact of guidelines and policy initiatives on youth outcomes and collaborative models of care across sectors that incorporate the child and family as active participants in care.

Over the next two years, Dr. Leslie will be working with the Health and Medical Services Team; Donna Reulbach, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Practice; Leslie Akula, the Director of the Policy Unit; and staff in the Regions and Areas on policy development, planning and implementation related to comprehensive medical, developmental and mental health screening, diagnosis and treatment for children involved with DCF. She will be at DCF on a part-time basis and will meet quarterly with a Washington, DC panel of policymakers and practitioners regarding implementation of PL110-35, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, regarding the coordination of health and mental health services for children in child welfare. [ top ]

## Attorneys in Lowell Area Office forge positive community connections

The four attorneys representing the Lowell Area Office had a creative idea to improve their office's relationship with the Lowell Juvenile Court Community – host a pizza party! After convincing his colleagues Sean Bernard, Christopher Cook and Tracy Koral of the merits of having a lunch with members of the juvenile court, Attorney Mike Broderick extended an invitation to court personnel.

On February 26th, the Lowell attorneys hosted a pizza party at their office for more than 30 people. One attorney asked, "What is the agenda?" "No agenda," said Tracy, "Just pizza." Mike did set one rule: "No talking about cases." The conversation was light and collegial, and the defense attorneys, Juvenile Court staff and DCF lawyers easily consumed all 15 pizzas the DCF attorneys provided.

After lunch, everyone returned back to work and the relaxing lunch Mike envisioned had accomplished its goal – to set a better tone for DCF relationships with the juvenile court community. [ top ]

## Kids Fund Golf Tournament slated for May

The Annual DCF Kids Fund golf tournament will be held on Monday, May 4, 2009 at the Hopkinton Country Club. The DCF Kids Fund relies deeply on this fundraising event to raise funds for all of the important programs our DCF Kids Fund provides for the 45,000 children our agency serves, from sending children to summer camp, music lessons, and little league, to purchasing clothing for children entering care in emergency situations.

Please help us spread the word to your friends, relatives and colleagues. We are looking for raffle prizes, auction items, golfing foursomes, and sponsorships. Last year, the golf tournament raised \$70,000!

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.dcfkidsfund.org/tournament.htm> [ top ]

## Update on Strategic Plan and DCF Model

Our implementation of *Strengthening the Safety Net: DCF's Strategic Plan for Action* is moving forward with the development of the *DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model*. Over the coming months, our implementation of the practice model will provide opportunities to continue to improve our practices and more specifically, the lives of children and families we serve. DCF's development and pilot initiatives over the past several years have significantly contributed to our knowledge about casework practices that support positive outcomes for children and families. Aspects of that foundational work, recommendations from recent strategic planning, as well as current research and the experiences of other child welfare systems across the nation have been incorporated into the *DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model*.

The DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model is a reflection of our dedication to respectfully engage families and collaborate with the larger child welfare community. The model is based on the use of assessment and intervention approaches that have been demonstrated to effectively support children and strengthen families. The structures and processes which ground the casework practices of this model ensure that families, the larger

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## ➔ STRATEGIC PLAN, continued from page 2

child welfare community and our community partners experience clarity and consistency in our approach. Through our consistent implementation of these casework practices, we directly support achievement of positive outcomes for children and families.

Finally, the *DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model* establishes standardized casework practices to ensure that our resources are used efficiently and effectively to provide the level of intervention, support and services needed by children and families. Vigilant attention to outcomes resulting from our casework practice ensures that we are fulfilling our responsibility to safely stabilize and preserve families, safely reunify families, or safely create new families when necessary.

The practice model incorporates opportunities for extended screening and a differential response to ensure that our interventions are targeted effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of the child and the family. Standardized Safety and Risk Assessment tools support consistent clinical decision-making and a new comprehensive assessment and service plan will facilitate identification of the strengths and needs of a family and the services necessary to address those needs. Further information about the *DCF Integrated Casework Practice Model* will be posted on the Intranet as further development occurs. [\[ top \]](#)

## DCF tackles worker safety and well-being

On March 12, 2009, the DCF hosted a successful day-long Safety Conference at the Courtyard Marriott in Marlborough. The Conference, co-sponsored by the Statewide Safety Committee and the Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute, drew more than 225 DCF staff and community agency partners. In his keynote address, Commissioner Angelo McClain spoke about his strong commitment to employee wellness and safety for all DCF staff. In his remarks, Commissioner McClain shared a personal anecdote of his first days as a child welfare social worker, and how he grappled personally with the issue of worker safety. His understanding and passion about these important issues remain strong.

A series of morning and afternoon workshops followed the Commissioner's remarks and the question and answer period. The wide-ranging workshops, led by outstanding presenters from within and outside the Department included: Supporting Safety in the Field and Developing

Safety Plans; Working with Families Affected by Abuse and Violence: Reflections from the Front Line; Safety Organized Practice: When Families are Safer, Workers are Safer; Engaging Legal Systems to Protect DCF staff; and a panel discussion, Social Worker Safety: Stories from the Field. DCF presenters were Marcia Graves-Roddy, Robin Cormier, Sophia Chin, John Vogel, Bree Pasternack, Kathy Donovan, Fernando Mederos, Beryl Domingo, Christine Greenberg, Patricia Scibak, Brendan Murray, Steve Ryan, and Kelly Prendergast.

Deputy Commissioner Olga Roche provided closing remarks in which she detailed a number of the Department's current and future initiatives around worker safety and employee wellness. As a follow-up to the Conference, the Conference Planning Committee will soon develop a plan for the dissemination of the information and materials provided at the Conference.

Thank you to the Conference Planning Committee for all of their hard work and congratulations on the great success of your event! [\[ top \]](#)

## DCF to participate in Youth Pride Parade

On Saturday, May 9th, DCF's GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) Liaisons will lead a group of DCF youth and families in this year's 2009 Youth Pride festivities.

Youth Pride is the oldest and largest GLBT pride event for youth in the nation. Since its inception in 1994, Youth Pride has been wildly successful alleviating isolation and the social stigma associated with being a GLBT youth. Youth Pride is a fantastic celebration attended by thousands of youth from all over New England.

The Youth Pride festivities are scheduled from 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm on the Boston Common. Please coordinate with a GLBT Liaison in your office if you'd like to volunteer for the event or if you plan to come to support the youth and their families attending. All are welcome! [\[ top \]](#)

## CBHI extends deadlines, announces community service agency contracts

In a final ruling on the January 16, 2009 motion to modify the Judgment in the "Rosie D. v. Romney" class-action lawsuit, the US District Court has allowed MassHealth to partially extend court-ordered service implementation deadlines for In-Home Behavioral Services, Therapeutic Mentoring, In-Home Therapy and Crisis Stabilization.

In his February 25th ruling, US District Court Judge Michael Posner approved extensions of four service implementation deadlines. Specifically, the court extended the deadline from July 1, 2009 for:

- In-Home Behavioral Services to October 1, 2009;
- Therapeutic Mentoring to October 1, 2009;
- In-Home Therapy to November 1, 2009; and
- Crisis Stabilization to December 1, 2009

It should be noted that Intensive Care Coordination, Mobile Crisis Intervention and Family Partners maintains the original July 1, 2009 implementation date. However, it is also important to note that all services must be approved by the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) prior to implementation. Late last year, CMS approved Intensive Care Coordination however; approval for all other services is currently pending.

Additionally, the MassHealth Managed Care Entities have announced the awards for the statewide Community Service Agency (CSA) contracts. The 32 CSAs will provide Intensive Care Coordination using the Wraparound care planning process for MassHealth members under the age of 21 with serious emotional disturbance.

For a listing of the CSA awards please visit:  
[http://www.masspartnership.com/doc/CSAWinnersforPosting03\\_6\\_09.pdf](http://www.masspartnership.com/doc/CSAWinnersforPosting03_6_09.pdf) [ top ]

## Testimony on FY10 Budget

On March 11th, Commissioner McClain testified before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. To read the full DCF testimony, please visit the news and update section of the DCF website: [www.mass.gov/dcf](http://www.mass.gov/dcf) [ top ]

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## DCF makes changes to Senior Staff

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Commissioner

### • Patti Mackin

Chief of Staff

### • Jan Nisenbaum

Deputy Commissioner  
Clinical Services and  
Program Operations

### • Olga Roche

Deputy Commissioner  
Field Operations

### • Bob Wentworth

Assistant Commissioner  
Planning and Program  
Development

### • Donna Reulbach

Assistant Commissioner  
Practice and Policy

### • Mary Gambon

Assistant Commissioner  
Adoption, Foster Care  
and Adolescent Services

### • Reuben Ferriera

Assistant Commissioner  
Continuous Quality  
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### • Mary Ellen Bennard

Chief Information Officer

### • Ellen Finnegan

Chief Financial Officer

### • Virginia Peel

General Counsel

### • Alison Goodwin

Director of Public Affairs

### • Manuel Dacosta

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### • John Laing

Community Representative  
and member of Family  
Advisory Committee

### • Lisa Bacon

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